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ABSTRACT

The three articles in this journal issue focus on composition problems and alternatives. The topics discussed are compositional invention, composition based on students' experiences, and an oral technique for teaching basic composition. The issue also contains reviews of recent publications in the field of composition. (FL)

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Volume 64 December, 1978 No. 1

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LOIS CAFFYN: AN APPRECIATION

Readers of this issue of *Kansas English* will find something missing: the column, "From the State Specialist's Desk." There is a reason: Lois Caffyn retired from her position in the State Department of Education last June. I think it would be safe to say that the absence of Lois's column from these pages is really no more noticeable than the disappearance of Pike's Peak would be from Colorado Springs. Facetiousness aside, we have sustained a loss.

I have been looking through issues of *Kansas English* dating back to the beginning of this decade. In them Lois has covered such diverse topics as the fundamental relationship between language teaching and literacy; continuity and progression in composition programs; the practical consequences of Title IX legislation; graduation requirements and their efffect on the English curriculum; ability grouping and elective programs; career education and the language arts; accreditation; certification of teachers in language arts; behavioral objectives and accountability. Always her remarks were timely and beneficial to those on the firing line. Always her manuscripts reached me, thoughtfully composed, meticulously edited, and on time. She has been this editor's constant friend, one on whom I could consistently depend. I deeply regret that the last two issues of *Kansas English* which I edit will not carry Lois's column. The only bright spot in this situation is the knowledge (which I have just recently gained) that Mel Riggs is now our state specialist, and he has agreed to write a column for us. For that we are grateful.

Mel's achievement will be in the future. Lois's is before us, and it has been distinguished. I am sure that every member of KATE joins with me in expressing our deepest appreciation to Lois for the quality and consistency of service she has rendered to language arts teachers in Kansas.

"Consider that she laboured not for herself only, but for all that seek learning."

DCS

On September 22, 1978, at the KLAS meetings in Wichita, Lois Caffyn was presented a distinguished service award. She could not be there for the meeting, so Tom Hemmens accepted for her and read the following letter. We would like to share it with you.

3300 Eveningside Dr., Apt. 20
Topeka, Kansas 66614

Dear Friends and Fellow Workers in the Language Arts:

Thank you so much for this distinct honor indicating that I have made some worthwhile contribution to education in Kansas. I deeply regret not being able to be present in person to receive it, but perhaps that makes it mean even more to me.

Teaching is hard, but no one but a teacher will ever know that. It is harder these days than in the distant past when education was considered a privilege rather than an obligation. It is harder than when the home and community background formed a solid supportive environment in which the parent generation wanted "my kids to have better than I got"—if there ever was such a time. At least since I began my own teaching during the Great Depression of the late 1930's, when there were few jobs for even the best educated, the American society has been somewhat ambivalent about just *how* well educated it wanted its children to be, especially in the language arts.

You who are out there on the front lines, taking your books, papers, and courage to classes every day, with only suggestions from me, are the ones who are making the contributions to education; but—don't misunderstand me—I am most happy to accept some of the credit, as you have graciously decided to send it my way.

I gave education all I had, with the result that with a physical breakdown I did not quite make it to the tape; but I deeply hope that some things I did, said, or wrote made teaching and learning in the language arts just a little better.

Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

Lois P. Caffyn

Lois P. Caffyn

Some Commonplaces of Compositional Invention

CARL HOLMBERG
Pennsylvania State University of Hazleton

In the classical tradition there are many rhetorics.[1] Hence it would be incorrect to assume that Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, the sophists, the Attic orators, Quintilian, Cicero, and others had a mutually shared conception of "rhetoric." It is, therefore, misleading to try to capture the essence of ancient rhetoric by distilling it to "classical rhetoric." Of course, this is not to say that there can be no uniform program perceived for their concept of rhetoric, for there can. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to discover and to demonstrate the unifying factors of classical rhetoric; instead, it is to begin exploration of the theories of invention and practices which correspond to these rhetorics, especially, the common places of compositional invention.

What is "compositional invention?" Compositional invention is any rhetorical procedure used to generate compositions. A rhetorical procedure is a human process which could roughly be called an aleatory procedure, that is, a hit or miss affair. Rhetorical processes do not always secure a beautiful, perfect, or correct product, not every time anyway. However, they do tend to limit the chances of failure while encouraging the likelihood of success. In terms of composition this means a compositional invention procedure is some sequence of skills, experiences, and/or techniques which a learner integrates in order to facilitate movement toward good composition. As many language intructors know, teaching students grammar, spelling punctuation, and the pleasantries of style does not ensure student perfection of composition, and yet the sequencing of these as skills and techniques does encourage the likelihood of success.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INVENTION

The sequencings of invention follow a basic pattern. This pattern can be apprehended if one were to think of a person at a party. This person is a stranger to most of the other persons; he would like to get to know them. He overhears one small group of persons talking about the quality of service on plane rides; after a bit it seems like they are talking about plane rides in general. Quickly his mind begins racing, "I could talk about service I've experienced in planes, good and bad; maybe they'd think the time I got lost in an airport during a 5th grade field trip is funny; I know a stewardess joke; I've seen the *Airport* movies . . ."

The pattern goes like this: a subject happens to a person and the person refers to his own experiences of the subject and then, perhaps, he states them. In this way an internal subject—one's own experience—becomes objectified and related to someone else's experience. This same pattern occurs in all problem solving; one experience's a need and then searches for prior experiences or new experiences with the same or similar difficulty, and then acts accordingly; one meets a question and then gets wrapped up in answering it. In rhetorical theory this pattern is stated in these terms: a writer or speaker finds a *topic* (*topos, -oi*, Gk. for "place"), a place of necessary

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inquiry; he or she then invents, generates, or retrieves a set of inventories appropriate to the topic. In the above example the topic is "plane rides"; the inventing occurs as the search for experiences related to that topic. Notice that the pattern involves an event which happens to a person, followed or engaged by some set of appropriating actions which that person consciously or unconsciously institutes in order to be able to successfully invent messages which relate to that event.

Where do these inventories or experiences come from? They are the formulative experiences already integrated into a human's system which bear meaning in relation to subsequent experiences. Or, if more scientific language were to be chosen, inventories are sets of information coded into the human system through complicated perceptual apparatus. In both statements the notions of integration and coding are synonymous. They assume that the discovery of invention of communication necessarily involves a network of generating meaning with regards to any new expereince; this network is part of being human. Depending upon one's definition of being human, the concept of this network will vary. No matter the definition of "human," both concepts must account for the "topic-referring to inventory" scheme.

What happens when the inventories pertinent to a human's experiences become so complicated that they become too difficult to be integrated carefully into the human's sense of being or too difficult to be coded successfully into a human's "memory banks?" When this happens, humans usually code the inventories into physical objects or symbol systems which can be consulted by manipulating that externalized set of inventories. For instance, a pocket calculator is a physical object coded to solve problems in less time and effort—and with more consistency—than the unaided intelligence. For those learning the arts of communication, lists of concepts or activities have been compiled for consultation in producing accurate communication. Some of these lists appear later in this paper; they speak with the authority of over two thousand years of human experience. Notice, though, that in both pocket calculators and in symbolic lists, the extension of human meaning into objects and symbols does not change the pattern of invention; the pattern of "event-human consultation of inventories" remains the same.

THE UNSTATED COMMONPLACE OF CLASSICAL INVENTION

Before any of the compositional inventories can be demonstrated, their unstated counterparts must be mentioned. There are *sine qua non* concepts for the classical pedagogy of invention which are not themselves often referred to as the places or commonplaces of invention. In essence, these unstated commonplaces of classical invention serve as the core inventory for the western pedagogy of invention. The list includes (1) technique/lifestyle; that is, invention can be thought of as a technique only to be used when one wishes to generate a composition. It can also be thought of as a part of the way we are human. The pedagogical problem here can be addressed by a teacher of invention as the possible conflict between the technique-invention to be learned by a student and the lifestyle-invention patterns a student lives in his everyday life. They may not be the same and this could inhibit the learning of the technique invention.[2]

(2) Internal/external; either inventories are internal to student, i.e. memorized or so familiar that they will not be easily forgotten, or they are also partially externalized

in some object or set of symbols. The problems for teachers of invention here are those of helping the student internalize invention external to him or her, and of not letting the student become too dependent upon an externally coded system so that the generation of language without that external crutch might easily become difficult and frustrating.

(3) Stated/unstated; sometimes the inventories a human lives by are not consciously stated; they may even not be habitual or systematically instituted. On the other hand the inventories could be consciously applied set of norms, like rules to live by. These can fluctuate back and forth; one day a person has to work hard to produce a composition, using the stated inventories or rules to be followed; however, the next day through practice, the inventories can be ignored or unstated and yet they still help formulate a composition. The problem for invention instructors depends upon the students; some need stated inventories because they founder when there are no established rules to follow; others need unstated inventories since they feel blocked and overcontrolled by seemingly formal and artificial lists of requirements for "good" composition.

(4) Loose/directed; sometimes the work of invention flows into flexible paths; at other times it occurs in a more goal-oriented fashion. In terms of composition pedagogy this means that at times it is better for an instructor to "back off" and let the student "fool around." At other times an instructor must insist upon student discipline.

(5) Generate/evaluate; so far this paper has emphasized the generation aspect of invention; that is, invention has been conceived of mostly as a process of creation. This process usually occurs in the loose sense but can occur in the directed sense. In contrast, once "ideas" or materials have been found to help explain a particular topic, they need to be organized, refined, evaluated, criticized, directed. Invention also serves these functions. In fact, the specific *topoi* of classical invention which appears in the appendix and the example of topical invention in the section following this are examples of inventories consulted more for the evaluation and further production of materials once they have been generated.

THE TWO FUNCTIONS OF CLASSICAL INVENTION, WITH EXPLANATION

The two functions are *generation* of "what to say" about any given topic and *evaluation* of what then is "said" with its further refinement. These functions are not peculiar to classical invention. All compositional inventions must fulfill these functions. However, the traditional ways in which they are to be fulfilled were originated within the "classical tradition."

With regards to the generation function, a common problem in wirting courses is the assigning of topics. Let the students choose? Then he or she can say "I don't know how to come up with a topic." Let the teacher choose? Then the activity of the student learning to generate material is shunted from the start. In the "classical" tradition, theory, imitation, and practice offer the grounds for student familiarity with the generation of materials.[3] Cicero and Quintilian insisted upon a broad education for orators and writers as the best basis for the generation of materials. This is to say, if a person lacks experience of what to say—or lacks experience, plain and simply—then

he or she will most likely have a problem in composing appropriate messages. A writer needs basic life inventories and practice writing about them.

Thus, if an invention instructor were to follow the lead of some classical rhetoricians, he or she would explain the standards of the course (theory), have the student read good writing for the sake of its imitation, and then have the student practice certain styles or genres, usually determined by the course description. This sequencing of skills gives a composition class some common inventories. Assignments count on the student's ability to reflect his or her own experiences in the guise of preferred models and ideas. This is one way of getting a student to conduct an "invention" with regards to composition.

However, another way of learning to invent (in the sense of generate) materials for a paper is called "brainstorming." Actually, this process is assumed by the pedagogical sequence mentioned above, but in that sequence it is left to chance and to personal motivation of a particular student; that is, it is left an unstated, loose lifestyle happening. In the classical sequence outlined above, the student's ability to reflect his own experiences or inventories into the guise of preferred models and ideas often allows a snag to enter the pedagogy of invention: some students have not yet exercised this ability enough; thus, they become "blocked" at this point in the generation process. Brainstorming is an inventional antidote to this problem.

In classes the author has taught, the following steps for brainstorming were suggested:

1. on a sheet of paper, briefly describe the problem
2. relax
3. set a time or space limit
4. come up with possible solutions with little time in between each (write them on a sheet of paper)
5. no answer is good or bad—yet
6. if you cannot come up with a solution that seems to have much to do with the stated problem (#1), then write down the first thought which occurs to you
7. do this until the time or space limit is finished

If a student were assigned a persuasion paper on the topic of his choice, this process might go something like this:

1. I need a persuasion topic
2. coffee, tea, lie down before doing this, etc.
3. fill up a sheet of notebook paper, one possibility per line

4.—7. Panama can. treaty; tutition; pot; my father died last year; snow removal; care of plants; getting married; capital punishment; whales; sex; violence on tv; my roommate; cost of books; air pollution; skates; pencil; paper; room; boredom; dumb assignments; grades; study habits; how to get a date; gun control.

At this point the student needs to choose one of these as a topic for his composition. When he moves from the generation of possible topics he enters the realm of evaluating them; this is called "topical invention": (a) With a glance over his idea list, Pancan treaty, tuition, pot, cappunishment, tv violence, air pollution, and

gun control sound like what an instructor might approve as worthy for a composition. (b) They also would have library sources easier to find than most of the other topics. (c) The other topics like whales, snow removal, how to get a date, sex, death might be more interesting to the student. (d) So, if the student must pick one topic, why not choose one interesting to him but then dress it up as a public issue of our time? Notice the unstated critical inventory here: (a) topics probably preferred by the instructor, (b) documentation; easy/hard, (c) topics preferred by student, and (d) combination of inventories "a" and "c."

Let us say the student in question opted for the topic of "whales," with his persuasion position possibly "The decimation of the whale must be prevented." This student needs to collect materials. The problem is, what materials need to be collected? In answer to this problem, the student could refer to a stated list of topics which have proven to be the most helpful in selecting pertinent data for most subjects. Such a list is usually suggested by the instructor or the text used in the composition course. One such list, with a beginning extrapolation, is:

DEFINITION (of a whale, of topic, of position)
- Genus—kinds of, which kind of whale am I talking about?
- Division—different positions than the one I want to take? how to divide my time on this paper and other work?

COMPARISON (of topic to others?)
- Similarity—to what? fish, humans, other ocean mammals?
- Difference—variety in sizes? what makes their plight different from other ocean mammals?
- Degree—size, extent of habitat, speed, hydrodynamics, amount of food it eats, magnitude of problem, what kinds and how much of whale products are used in industry, by what kinds of people?

RELATIONSHIP (whale—environment—humans?)
- Cause and effect; antecedent—consequence—position in ocean ecology; what it "causes" and what sustains the whale; in evolution, what performed its function in ecological cycle before it was around; did anything die off because of its evolution?
- Contraries—what's good/bad for whale; what from whales is good/bad for humans; what makes saving the whale desirable? is there sukch a thing as "humane" treatment of whales?
- Contraditions—keep on the lookout for sources of information which contradict each other or which are self-contradictory; might cast doubt on the source

CIRCUMSTANCE
- Possible/impossible—need solutions that are workable; that an individual, group, and/or government could do; need to show that dire results of no action are possible and could affect reader's life
- Past fact/future probability—what happened in past to other animals or ecological system in the same plight? is extinction really likely, or am I just talking from the top of my hat?

TESTIMONY

Authority—who is an authority about whales; who says so; what do they say?

Testimonial—what do admired people think about the problem?

Statistics—are there any?

Maxims—are there any which which pertain to the topic; stitch in time?

Law—what is the current status of national law and international treaty regarding the problem and those similar to it?

Precedents—anything like whale decimation happen before; what done about it?[4]

Perhaps after skeining his topic through such a list, the student might reformulate his position to "The decimation of the blue whale must be prevented while exploring alternatives to whale-related products." In other words, consulting a list of topics helps to focus the inquiry while also suggesting conceptual avenues for the complete coverage of matters pertinent to the inquired subject. If a student were to investigate the subject "whales," guided by the topical inventory above, he would certainly have a good start; he would know what types of information to look for and he would have a second sense for knowing when he would have collected enough information. He would then be ready to begin the more refined but still possibly rough formulation of his position paper. In turn, this formation could be guided by the usually stated "specific" topics of inventories for classical composition. These inventories include the special topics of invention, arrangement, and style for written composition, with delivery and memory added to them for oral composition. In essence, arrangement, style, delivery, and memory can be thought of as subtopics of invention; they also proceed through an inventional sequencing of skills.

APPENDIX: The Usually State Specific *Topoi* of Compositional Invention

Aristotle, "Art of Rhetoric[5]	ad Herennium[6]	Baker, The Practical Stylist[7]	Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student[8]
invention, Books I; II	Books I; II; III, viii, 15	pp. 1-7; 85-121	pp. 45-298
arrangement, Book III, xiii-xix	Book III, ix, 16-x, 18	pp. 8-15	pp. 299-413
style, Book III, i-xii	Book IV	pp. 16-84; 122-91	pp. 414-593
memory, no thorough inclusion	Book III, xvi, 28-xxiv, 40	no inclusion	no inclusion
delivery, no thorough inclusion	Book III, xi, 19-xv, 27	no inclusion	no inclusion

One must remember that composition is treated as an art by these authors; it is an activity which can be planned, controlled, developed by rule governed procedures. Hence, Aristotle does not develop the canon of delivery since he thinks of it more as an innate "knack"; it cannot be treated as an art.[9] The author of *ad Herennium* does describe memory and delivery as arts. Baker and Corbett delete memory and delivery quite naturally since they are functions of oral composition, not written composition; their basis for exclusion is not whether memory and delivery are arts at all: They are not *topoi* of written composition. Of course, each of these "canons" of "classical rhetoric" has further specific topics for the development of compositions. Instead of complicating the matter, the author directs the reader to C. S. Baldwin's *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959).

NOTES

[1]For this principle of viewing rheoric pluralistically, see Richard McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, Volume 17, 1 (January, 1942), 1-32.

[2]Carl B. Holmberg, "The Nature and Adequacy of Invention: A Contribution to the Pedagogy of Composition," final paper, N.E.H. summer seminar, Modern Developments in the Art of Invention, Richard Young, director, The U. of Michigan, 1977.

[3]*ad herennium*, I, ii, 3.

[4]This topical checklist was taken from Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, fifth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 107-45. Perhaps a more usable and less repetitive list can be found in John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold, *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, third ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), pp. 78-82.

[5]Translated by John Henry Freese for the Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1967).

[6]Translated by Harry Caplan for the Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1968).

[7]Sheridan Baker, fourth ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977).

[8]Seond edition (New York. oxford U Press, 1971).

[9]Book III, i, 7.

REAL EXPERIENCES AND COMPOSITION: A RECOMMENDATION

ROBERT L. WILSON
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

George Hillocks, Jr., notes in *Alternatives in English* that "most English teachers know very little about the teaching of reading and view reading as somehow distinct from the study of literature . . . Any English teacher who does not see himself as one who should . . . help his students to interpret what they read is ignoring the realities that engulf him . . In the same sense, every English teacher must regard himself as a teacher of composition." Hillocks' concern for the teacher of composition reflects a finding of the Squire and Applebee Study (1966), that what English teachers teach worst is composition.

The fact that by and large the teaching of composition as a compartmentalized assortment of activities has failed in the past and the fact that students' attitudes toward writing have remained basically negative, one's initial reaction to HOW TO TEACH WRITING might well be "to do away with the teaching of writing." Although that may seem an oversimplified solution to the problem of teaching others to write, if the teaching of composition has been such a dismal failure, why continue doing it—at least in the manner that it has been done in the past?

The fact that the teaching of composition has been a dismal failure presumes that the manner of teaching composition is valid. However, that assumption may be erroneous. Only in content-centered curricula are traditional approaches to the teaching of composition appropriate. In a student-centered curriculum, the traditional focus is totally inappropriate.

Assuming, as Dixon does in his summary of the Dartmouth Conference of 1966, that language is rooted in experience, students' experiences become central to the teaching of composition. Although their experiences are rooted primarily in the actualities of the world outside the classroom, it seems that many kinds of meaningful experiences could be structured for them within the framework of school.

It seems, also, that the act of writing needs to be preceded and succeeded with lead-in and follow-up activities respectfully. Drawing from the actualities of his community, the student comes to school with an experiential preparedness about non-school experiences. Regrettably, however, he is expected to turn off his *real* world when he enters the *artificial* world of school each day. At the end of his artifically-staged day, his non-school sensors click on automatically. Rather than the teacher of composition utilizing the resources of the students' experiences, typically the teacher denies the student the opportunity to utilize them in the classroom. Unfortunately, the teacher of writing has been more concerned with the mechanical precision of the student's paper than with what he had to say. He has enforced religiously the taboos of the school. Thus, the topics for writing have seemed to the students very mundane compared to the far more exhilarating experience of their *real* world.

Robert L. Wilson is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff where he chairs the Committee on Freshman Composition.

Even if the teacher of composition is not permitted or is not willing to let students draw on their deep personal experiences, he can be at least somewhat creative in his approach to structuring awareness activities that will eventually culminate in a writing exercise. To draw from personal experience, I once discovered that students are most unfamiliar with the most "familiar" objects in their midst. The things they most take for granted are among the things they know least. They have become oblivious to the common objects in their immediate environment. In many cases, the students had never seriously experienced a given object; in other instances, they knew the object by one sense only. In other words, they were strangers with their surroundings.

Lead-in activities to writing need to be simulating and real to the students, who need to be actively involved in experiencing. Often the experiences need to be novel—not necessarily to the teacher, but certainly to the students. Total sensory experiences *can* successfully capture the interest of high-school age students. If, as Dixon says, language is rooted in experience, then experience must breed language.

Not only might a student know a dandelion blossom by its color pigment and/or its circular shape, but he might also know it by its texture or by the taste of its stem. Merely getting to know the dandelion in unfamiliar ways in itself is not enough insofar as sensory experiences relate to languaging. Students must also be able to verbalize the taste of the dandelion stem. The assortment of descriptive terms within the class can then be shared, compared, and refined.

A variety of common objects within the immediate environment of the school can be used and experienced in a variety of unique ways. In fact, there are phenomena in the school environment of every student that are common to his non-school experiences. Those phenomena—people, bicycles, food, air, and daylight, to name a few—would be a likely place to start.

In terms of the anatomy, students can experience the *touch* of human hair. Careful observation will lead them to discover that hair has many different textures—silky, coarse, bristly, snarled, fine, smooth, thin, thick, and so on. Further observation will, in all probability, reveal a distinction between the textures of cranial hair and facial hair. If the situation allows, students will discover that the cranial hair of blacks and whites has distinctly different textures.

As human hair has different textures, a fried hamburger has different *tastes*. In addition to different people perceiving a common taste in different ways, the differences in taste may be attributed to any one of a number of external factors as well. For example, the tastes of hamburger will be determined by how fresh it is; whether or not it was frozen; whether or not it came from grain-fed beef, whether it as cooked over an open fire, on a grill, or in a skillet; whether or not it was cooked in oil; whether or not it contained preservatives; and its degree of leanness. Thus, no two hamburgers, in all probability, will taste the same. But to identify the separate tastes and what distinguishes one from the other can be articulated by the keenly perceptive individual.

As human hair has varied textures and as hamburgers has varied tastes, tobacco smoke has different *smells*. As the perceptive individual will eventually discover, different brands of cigarettes give off differing aromas when they are lit. Some have a strong tobacco smell; other have a more distinct paper-like aroma. Mentholated varieties, on the other hand, give off a still different odor. Careful observation of these

distinctions and the ability to articulate them will make for good writing. Furthermore, a student can learn to readily distinguish smokers from nonsmokers on the basis of his olfactory perceptions.

As textures, tastes, and smells are of different kinds, so are the *sounds* of zippers unique. The individual sounds are determined in part by the material they are made of. To be specific, the sound of a plastic zipper is a softer, less threatening sound than the sound of a metal zipper, whose sound is coarser and more defensive. Zippers, like people, have personalities of their own, determined in part by the person zippering. Some of the sounds suggest gentility, others anger; some imply a sense of urgency, others a patient stillness. Thus, one cannot accurately perceive the separate sounds of zippers as being alike.

Many human perceptions are of a *visual* nature and, like the other sensory perceptions, are individualistic. A sunrise, for example, is a phenomenon that one perceives visually. Existing weather conditions or seasonal variations, however, affect one's perceptions of a sunrise. All will not be as distinct as the others. In fact, on an overcast day, the presence of the sun may be completely obscured from one's vision. Varying degrees of air pollution will also affect one's perceptions of the sunrise. Other variations that affect one's perceptions of the sunrise include such things as the angle of the earth's axis. For that reason, the sun will rise in a northeasterly direction in spring and in a southeasterly direction in the autumn. To be sure, only the careful observer will recognize the subtleties of difference in the varied sunrises.

Once the phenomena common to school and community have been explored, the stage is then set to carefully explore some purely non-school phenomena that in all probability are but casually and carelessly observed apart from school.

So as to maximize the student's experience and to allow him the opportunity to experience separately each object by the separate senses, the teacher needs to consider blocking out the student's non-perceiving senses in each activity. In other words, for the student to experience the taste of a stimulus, it is best that he neither see nor smell nor feel the stimulus beforehand. Rather, the experience of tasting should be isolated. Ultimately, the separate experiences for each object should come to bear on the total perception and knowledge of that object.

Personally, I find this approach to the teaching of composition desirable for a number of reasons, among them being the likelihood that English will no doubt be taught in rather traditional ways in the vast majority of schools for a long time to come. One of the valuable by-products of this strategy is creating the awareness among students that no subject is an island unto itself. The following classification depicts the relatedness of English via composition to other subject matters.

SENSE	CONCEPTS	SUBJECT AREAS
sight	symmetrical vs. non-symmetrical	geometry, art
	circular vs. non-circular	physics, physical science
	large vs. small	arithmetic
	the color spectrum	physical science, art
smell	fragrance vs. absence of smell	physical science
	sweet vs. sour	chemistry, home economics
	pungent vs. faint	physical science, chemistry

sound	loud vs. soft	physical science, physics
	melodic vs. dischordant	music, physics
	the spectrum of emotions	psychology
taste	the temperature spectrum	chemistry, physics
	taste vs. temperature hot	physics, chemistry
	bland vs. seasoned	home economics
touch	smooth vs. abrasive	art, wood- and metalworking
	serrate vs. smooth	biology, home economics
	2-D vs. 3-D	drafting, art, geometry
	spectrum of geometric shapes	geometry, drafting, art

Hence, sensory experiences are grounded in all content areas in one way or another. Thus, students may be lured into the technical vocabularies of the various disciplines according to their interests and experiences.

From experiencing to abstracting the experience and languaging about the experience is the sequence of events. The student is now at the point of ordering his experiences through language. The task of the student becomes one of putting together in writing verbal patterns that parallel his experiences and in such a way as to have an interesting and orderly finished product. The finished product then needs to be welded together in some kind of order—either logically, chronologically, or spatially. And with appropriate transitional elements that show the proper relationships between successive components of the paper, the composition will take on coherence and continuity.

Having been guided through a series of structured and meaningful sensory experiences, how then does the student make use of the raw materials for writing? If the teacher's objective is to have the student write, it seems that rather than trying to teach them how to write he should let them write. As the student expands his knowledge of objects through discovery, it seems that he might best learn to write by discovery, also—learning in *his* own way *his* own techniques. The test will be in sharing with his classmates whether or not he had anything to say and whether or not he was able to communicate it effectively. The fact that students learn from students, not only from teachers, it seems that teachers have been remiss not to capitalize more on the exchanges of students.

What might students do in groups to improve their papers? By sharing them in the group, students can point out to one another what would strengthen their papers. Also, by sharing their papers, the students can make each other aware of those techniques that are either appropriate or ineffective. For example, the following exchange illustrates a constructive dialogue between two students, laboring over a paper.

> *STUDENT A*: For some reason, I don't think my paper is very convincing. What should I do with it?
>
> *STUDENT B*: I don't really understand what you mean in your opening paragraph. What are you trying to say?
>
> *STUDENT A*: Well, even though people are basically honest, they are selfish; and a lot of times they hurt people without meaning to.

STUDENT B: That really doesn't come across in your introduction at all. In fact, there is no focus to your paper. Why don't you try [writing] a thesis statement? And get rid of that concluding sentence in the first paragraph. It's redundant.

STUDENT A: But don't I need some kind of concluding statement there?

STUDENT B: Yes, but it should be more of a summary statement that ties your paragraph together.

STUDENT A: Oh. The problem, then, is with the introduction. Okay. Let's get a thesis statement.

As can be seen in this exchange, Student B does not merely point out the weaknesses of the paper. Rather, Student B offers some solutions to the problems that have been identified. As negative criticism in itself is of little value, a teacher should strive to have the students offer constructive criticism to their classmates. It seems doubtful that merely to suggest things not to do would result in better writing; rather, students need some recourse in terms of what they might have done in lieu of what they did.

Another advantage of students learning from students is that they are a more representative audience than is the teacher alone. In terms of interests and the ability to receive communication, the chances are enhanced for more meaningful analysis and criticism when students share their papers with each other. For a teacher to be able to evaluate a piece of writing fairly, he must first have some knowledge of the subject. Also, his interest or lack of interest in the topic cannot help but affect how meaningful his evaluation is. In a class of students, although not every individual will be interested in every topic, at least the chances are increased that a student's composition will find a receptive audience with someone.

The oral exchange in the writing class has yet another advantage. Because of his heavy work load, the teacher very often evaluates a composition with grade only. In no way does a grade by itself reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a student's paper. Often, written comments fail to communicate effectively the problem and how the student might go about correcting it. For evaluation to be effective, I maintain that it is imperative to have oral exchanges so that the student has the opportunity to ask: "Do you mean that I should . . .?" This gives the evaluator, teacher or student, the opportunity to clarify explicitly the point he is attempting to make. When students share orally their papers, the empahsis shifts from grades to mastery of writing techniques, which, it seems, is the only valid reason for students writing in the first place. Teachers of composition need to concern themselves more with improving the student's ability to communicate and less with improving his grades. Whereas his grades will not guarantee his success in the outside world, his ability to communicate effectively will earn him high marks.

What, then, is the role of the teacher of writing? *Rather than teaching* the students how to write, it seems that his responsibility should be *facilitating the students' learning* to write. In summary, the teacher should be responsible for structuring a wide array of meaningful experiences about which students can write—bringing stimuli to the students and taking students to the stimuli. Teachers need to bring to the students'

attention striking as well as more subtle sensory stimuli. In fact, they need to structure awareness activities that will make students more keenly aware of things around them. Teachers need also to provide opportunities for students to share and compare their perceptions, which are, in themselves, exercises in language study as well as in perception. Furthermore, teachers need to provide students with opportunities to write on common topics and to compare the outcomes of their writing. Having provided the students with opportunities to explore and refine their perceptions, the teacher then becomes a partner in the learning process. The teacher, along with the students, assists others in the class in finding the right combinations of words to accurately record and to effectively convey the specific perceptions of the writer.

Finally, the finished product should not be an end in itself. Rather, some meaningful use should be made of the final paper. It should certainly be the stepping stone to other language activities—the exploration of literature, further writing, debates, the study and preparation of school publications, and so on. Again, the teacher is but a coordinator of the many activities of writing, which, like drops of water in a moving stream, flow in and out of each other.

An Oral Technique for Teaching Basic Composition

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As evidenced by the yearly flood of freshman English textbooks, English teachers are constantly looking for more effective pedagogical approaches to composition. There has not, however, been sufficient discussion of the benefits of taking an oral approach to correct written expression. But an appeal to the oral qualities of writing will produce students who by the end of the term are more confident about their ability to write, who write with greater facility, clarity, and less awkwardness, and, finally, students who have a clearer understanding of the levels of the English language and who are more receptive to learning both standard English and rhetorical modes. Although an oral approach to composition is an effective teaching device for all levels, it is particularly well suited in teaching the basic or developmental student.

Unfortunately, many students approach their essays with the idea that they must write some kind of "higher" or "literary" language. Consequently, the student labors untold hours over a five hundred word essay. He attempts to write a "sophisticated" style, and what he wants to say often either will not fit into this language or it fits in the most awkward manner. Hours are spent trying to match the thought to the presupposed quality of this "different" English. The student does not think in standard English; he is not familiar with it except in vague, shadowy terms; and most often he cannot compose in it.

How often have we heard a student complain "I spent all night writing this"? Sometimes our suspicions that the essay was written at breakfast are confirmed by the coffee stains on the paper; more often, however, the student is being perfectly honest. His stilted, awkward, artificial, and confused prose is not the result of inattention but the result of his approach to the entire concept of writing. We must, then, teach these students that the qualities of good writing are those of good spoken English, and we must teach him to write, initially, as he speaks, and that although standard English differs from everyday speech, there is no sharp, insurmountable difference. Once the students make the connection from spoken English to written, the leap from written colloquial English to standard English is more easily made.

We customarily state, then, that the object of this course in basic composition* is to obtain clarity of thought and expression by using everyday speech in writing. Second, we will learn how to write more formal English, keeping in mind our central aim of clarity based on the qualities of spoken English. Many freshmen are not ready for sophisticated techniques of stylistics, and we attempt to show that logical, clear prose is the objective of the course. At the same time we believe it is crucial to stress

*This oral approach, of course, need not be the primary focus for the entire term. Depending on the nature of the class, one may wish to use this approach for several weeks only; certainly an advanced class would not need a sustained focus on oral techniques although some attention, we believe, is useful to all students.

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and illustrate the fact that every person has his own voice, his own style. Each person speaks with different lengths and frequencies of pauses, different inflections, pronunciations, and vocabularies, and each student begins this course with his own unique, useful, and developed voice. We must, in order to loosen the student and allay his fear of facing a blank piece of paper, get him to recognize and accept his own style. Black community dialects, for example, are often precise, vigorous, and colorful, and those elements in a student's writing should not be ignored or ridiculed.

Certainly, a student has the right to his own language. His language represents a part of his heritage and culture, and as teachers we should not only try to preserve this heritage but also to cultivate it. Each of us has his own ethnic background, and even if that background has been blurred by time, each of us still has his own regional culture and speech. At the same time all of us know that a student unable to speak and write standard English when the occasion demands it, is not only ham-strung in his efforts to deal effectively with persons outside his own language group but also discriminated against when he approaches a prospective employer. The student has a right to his own language, but he also has a right to learn language alternatives.

Typically, we ask each student to read aloud several sentences from a prose selection. Each of the students is instructed to *listen* to the readers' voices and note one or two fellow students with unusual or interesting speech patterns. After everyone has read, the class chooses the two or three students whose speech is interesting, and as a class we analyze and compare the "voices" of these students, never, of course, judging, criticizing, or embarassing, but instead pointing out the colorful and attractive qualities of the person's speech. It is vital that the students feel easy about the differences of their own phrasing when they begin to put their speech down on paper. Incidently, this technique allows the instructor to identify the student with obviously severe reading problems.

Also, during an early class period we ask each student to write a two hundred word paragraph which we collect and file for use at a later point in the course. These original writing samples often show severe deficiencies in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. More importantly, they point out that the student writes sentences that are awkward, confusing, and sometimes meaningless. It is these problems in basic style and clarity of expression which we believe can be most effectively addressed by an attention to the oral qualities of composition. Following is an example of a student's first undirected writing assignment.

> [1]Likely engineering is becoming a rewarding career of the future all over the world. [2]Changes are taking place, and the engineer is called upon to make the design work on any major change in construction. [3]Buildings and sky-scrapers are being built that the structural and electrical engineers will know how well it will work before the first shovel is turned over. [4]Under the pencil of the mechanical engineer, the automobile itself is constantly changing. [5]Our transportation system will have to go through extensive changes, and the civil engineer will play a vital role in the changes. [6]The known energy sources are running out or need to be a practical refinement. [7]Petroleum and nuclear engineers are hard at work on the problem. [8]The national aeronautic and space administration

along with their host of engineers lead the space exploration of the world. [9]The United States military has many openings for almost every type of engineer. [10]The engineers in a time of crisis design work is ever more critical. [11]The door is open, but the stairs are steep for tomorrows designers.

Then, in order to begin teaching the student about the oral qualities of writing, we prepare several pairs of passages, sometimes taken from student samples of the previous semester, one awkward, stilted, and artificial, the other more rhythmic, flowing, and conversational. We read these aloud and ask the students to tell which one *sounds* better. In the first sessions one should make the distinctions between the two fairly obvious:

> One of the bad points of freshmen dorms is that you can't room with your best friend if he is an upperclassman.
>
> One of the bad points of freshmen dorms is if you would happen to have a good friend which you would like to room with and is an upperclassman you might as well forget it.
>
> Giving children who think like young adults such rights to buy liquor beverages is the worst idea the constitution ever drafted.
>
> Giving eighteen-year-olds the legal right to buy liquor is a serious mistake in legislation.
>
> Television is deteriorating the minds of Americans by pictures by de-emphasizing the use of the imagination and by consuming large amounts of time which could be better used in studying.
>
> Television is deteriorating the minds of Americans by eliminating the need to use our imaginations. It also prevents students from studying.

In a sense, this oral discrimination must be a relativistic technique. What sounds awkward to one student may sound fine to another, but this apparent conflict is a function of the individual "voices" of the students and should be used to reinforce the fact that each student has his own individual voice. We often prepare four or five versions of the same sentence, only one of them being actually awkward and stilted. The students may vary in their choices of the best sounding sentence, but few, if any, will choose the one designed to be the awkward one. In addition, along the way one should ask the students to search out and bring to class sentences that *sound* good to them and those that sound awkward or strange, examples often found right in their own text. Class discussions of these sentences can be stimulating and provide the basis for the realization that the written word has a sound and that some sentences *sound* correctly written and some do not. When the class is ready, we then begin to analyze why there is a difference: rhythm, placement of words, wordiness, images, vagueness, and the whole range of qualities that make for a well-constructed, clear, and good sounding sentence.

Then comes the actual writing, the connection in the student's mind between his

conversational speech, his voice, and the words he wants to put on paper. We return to his original writing sample and discuss it in class with many comments contributed by the students themselves. The example given on pages three and four elicited a number of comments from the class. Sentence 1 was felt to be awkward, particularly the sound of "Likely engineering." The students questioned the meaning of "of the future all over the world." Students had no strong objections to sentence 2 but felt that sentence 3 needed to be rewritten; they specifically asked, "the first shovel of what is turned over?" Students found sentence 4 humorous although they had not formally studied misplaced modifiers. Sentence 5 was passed as clear while sentence 6 the students did not understand at all. Sentence 7 was agreed to. In sentence 8 the students missed the subject verb disagreement but stated that "space exploration of the world" was unclear. The class believed that sentence 9 was clear and understandable but had problems with the meaning of sentence 10. Sentence 11 received critical acclaim from the class.

Now comes the crucial part of the course, and the student must be encouraged to use his own voice and to approach the paper before him with confidence that he can write what he means to say. Our instructions for the first written assignment, and for subsequent assignments, then, are as follows. Write your first draft quickly and spontaneously. Pretend you are talking to your roommate and simply write down what you would say. Make no effort to analyze your punctuation and spelling. Do not make any effort to search out or use words you would not normally use in everyday conversation. Next, read this rough draft aloud, slowly, making sure you read *exactly* what you have written down on your paper. If a sentence or phrase sounds awkward or strange, rewrite it until you think it sounds better; if something sounds bad, it is probably in some way technically incorrect. If you have a tape recorder read your essay and record it. If not, have someone read it aloud slowly to you. If anything still sounds awkward, rewrite. Above all, what you write for your final copy must sound right when read aloud, and what you have written should be clear to your listener. When you are satisfied that what you have written sounds clear and is free from any awkward expressions, correct your spelling, punctuation, organization, and proofread.

The student paragraph presented earlier was finally revised by the student as follows:

> All over the world engineering is becoming the most rewarding career of the future. Changes are taking place, and the engineer is called upon to work on the design of any major change in construction. Engineers must know that buildings and skyscrapers will stand before the first shovel of dirt is turned over. The automobile itself is constantly changing as new designs are being worked out. Our transportation systems will have to go through extensive changes, and the civil engineer will play a vital role in the changes. Known energy sources are running out and new ones must be found. Petroleum and nuclear engineers are hard at work on the problem. Engineers even aid in space exploration. The United States military has many openings for almost every type of engineer. In a time of

crisis design work by engineers is even more critical. The door is open, but the stairs are steep for tomorrow's designers.

While not technically a perfect paragraph the improvement is obvious, and the student feels comfortable with the writing process.

It is stimulating and often exciting to have several students read their essays to the class before the instructor has made any comments about the paper. In many instances class members will pick out awkward passages not noticed by the author, passages which often provide the basis for some lively and instructive class discussion. At the same time, this oral presentation gives both the author of the essay and the members of the class further opportunity to distinguish between good and bad writing on the basis of its sound. Later in the term this technique can be extended to allow for comments about organization, clarity, and completeness. It is also valuable in teaching concrete detail and in teaching how to use the senses—sight, touch, smell—in the student's writing if you encourage the class to interrupt the reader with questions such as "How tall is this man you're talking about? What's he wearing? What colors? What's his expression?" and the other specifics that an interested reader/listener is curious about.

After class discussion and the instructor's comments in conference with the student, the student will have a clearer idea about how to correct specific difficulties in the sound of the essay, how to correct the faults, and how he can further improve his writing and increase logic and clarity by writing as he speaks. How many times have we said to a student "What does this sentence mean? It's awkward and confusing. I don't understand. Just pretend you are explaining this to a friend. How would you say it in conversation?" Invariably, the response is clearer, more natural, more simply and easily understood; awkwardness and confusion usually vanish.

Although throughout the term one should stress both the oral qualities of writing and the importance of a student's using his own "voice," about half-way through the term we usually begin teaching the student how to translate his voice into a more nearly standard English. We discuss the various levels of writing: dialect, slang, colloquial English and formal English and then examine how the student can take a paper written in his own voice and change the level of usage—colloquial to slang, colloquial to formal. Our final objective, of course, is to show the student how to move from colloquial to a more formal English. Along the way we add discussion of the various points of punctuation, mechanics, and grammar.

Hopefully, approaching a freshman English class with an emphasis on the oral qualities of good prose by teaching first the oral qualities of the written word, emphasizing the student's own voice and showing him how to make the connection between his spoken voice and what he wants to say on paper, and by examining levels of language usage and "formalizing" the student's writing we will teach our basic freshmen more effectively than we could by strict observance of traditional methods.

FROM A READING DESK

Review of *Research on Composing*, eds. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell. NCTE, 1978. 203 pp.

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In 1963, Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer published what would become a standard reference in English education, *Research in Written Composition*. At that time the authors concluded that the state of composition research could be compared to "chemical research as it emerged from the period of alchemy: some terms are being defined usefully, a number of procedures are being refined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices and make-shift operations" (p. 5). Fifteen years later, the outlook for such research seems much brighter, evidenced by the recently published NCTE volume, *Research of Composing*, edited by Cooper and Odell.

Editors Cooper and Odell are quick to point out the differences between what they are attempting to do here and what Braddock et al. attempted in 1963. The earlier work "proceeded by summarizing existing research and by identifying five exemplary comparison-group research studies. By contrast, contributors to this volume review very little research except in so far as it helps explain the new lines of inquiry being developed in their chapters" (p. xiii). Besides this difference in content and focus from Braddock et al., these contributors and editors proceed from a different set of assumptions about our knowledge of how writing "works" than their predecessors: "Although they raised questions (e.g., "What is involved in the art of writing?") that could lead to basic research, the emphasis in their book—certainly in the five studies they reviewed at length—was on studies that apparently assumed we already had a thorough understanding of written products and processes. Unlike researchers cited by Braddock et al., contributors to this volume make no such assumption. Rather they raise questions that invite us to examine, test, and modify our basic assumptions about written composition" (p. xiii, xiv). The contributiors to *Research on Composing* are interested then in asking questions, in probing the nature of the writing process, in finding what is testable, ascertainable, and how to proceed with this testing procedure. This is *not* a "this-is-how-I-use-this-technique-successfully" book and in some ways the title may be misleading: this is not a *report* of research *per se* either. Instead, it is an attempt to find out what *kind* of research has to be done before we can even begin to talk about the right questions, let alone finding "answers."

All of the ten chapters in the book except the first were originally prepared for the Buffalo Conference on Researching Composing held at the State University of New York at Buffalo in the Fall of 1975. Included are two generous chapters on children's writing, one on the relation of the hand, eye, and brain in the writing process, one on the implication of cognitive-developmental psychology for composing research and a helpful introduction to the current status of discourse theory by the editors. Except for the somewhat disappointing chapters by Donald M. Murray and John Schultz which provide little that is not available elsewhere and in shorter form, the volume is filled with provocative discussions of where composing research is

headed and, likewise, what the future composition teacher may look like; *eclecticism* would seem to be the hallmark if this volume is any measure.

The chapter of greatest interest to me and one which should be read by every would-be composition teacher is Richard E. Young's "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention." Dr. Young not only gives us a helpful survey of four currently touted invention processes (Burke's dramatistic method, Rohman's prewriting method, Pike's tagmemic matrix, and classical invention) and how they or similar processes might be tested and evaluated, but he also exposes what Daniel Fogarty called "current-traditional rhetoric." Borrowing Thomas Kuhn's paradigmatic model, Young attempts to construct the "current-traditional" paradigm with its primary emphasis on *product* as opposed to *process* in writing—the unofficial and unacknowledged model that has harnessed and harassed composing research and kept it from progressing. While other disciplines seem to have a working paradigm, i.e., a set of widely-shared values and beliefs, composition teachers seem to be floundering, wandering aimlessly, trying every new device, technique, or theory that comes along. This aimlessness, Young argues, owes its existence to the current-traditional paradigm.

The rationale of this new volume on composing research can be sumed up in Young's own closing paragraph: "There is no algorithm, no systematic decision-making procedure that can dictate the choice of one theory rather than another. Informed choice will depend upon informed debate, and this requires that we be clear about our criteria for judgement, that we agree on the meaning of our terms, that we have evidence to support claims about the adequacy of one or another of the theories—the process is familiar to us all. If we are to carry it out responsibly, much research needs to be done."

E. D. Hirsch, *The Philosophy of Composition*. University of Chicago Press, 1977. 200 pp. $9.00.

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The Philosophy of Composition, E. D. Hirsch's empirically-based, polemical book about what needs to be taught in the field of composition has deserved its quick popularity, for Hirsch has joined Kinneavy, Young, and the few others who have made significant contributions to the theory of composition. Yet there are sub-groups in the profession—linguists especially, but also proponents of bi-dialectism, rhetorical invention and more generally, student-centered teaching—who claim that their areas are misrepresented, or even worse, ignored by Hirsch in his single-minded pursuit of first principles. Nevertheless, it is precisely his determination to derive the "goals of composition teaching" from linguistic, psycholinguistic and philological principles that makes this a valuable book for teachers.

What then are the goals of composition teaching? Hirsch assumes, not unreasonably, that our fundamental goal is to teach students how to recognize and produce good prose. But what, specifically, is meant by "good"? Ultimately, the whole book is a response to this question; all of the chapters lead up to or away from Hirsch's definition of "the universal characteristics of good prose." For if these characteristics

can be established, they make possible "the valid assessment of writing ability," which in turn enables us to evaluate the effectiveness of different methods of teaching writing.

Good prose, Hirsch concludes, is readable, or "efficient" prose. He realizes, of course, that no absolute criterion like efficiency would be useful, because simple prose—e.g. that found in childrens' books—would require less effort to read, and would thus be "better" than the relatively complex prose of philosophy texts or even popular magazines. Consequently, he has developed the criterion of "relative readability": "One prose style is better than another when it communicates the same meanings as the other does but requires less effort from the reader" (p. 9).

But there is still a problem with "meaning." If an ornate passage conveys essentially the same information as a plain one, yet requires more effort from the reader, we don't necessarily call it "worse"; the author may have succeeded very well in creating his intended effects. As a result, Hirsch extends relative readability to include "the most efficient communication of *any* semantic intention." Thus an essential aspect of readability is "the *rhetorical* efficiency of prose—its success in affecting the implied reader in ways that transcend the mere conveying of information" (p. 75).

Rhetoricians have complained that Hirsch manages to avoid dealing with rhetorical, stylistic, and even aesthetic intent by lumping them together under "semantic intention." Yet within the bounds he has so carefully defined, Hirsch does make relative readability a useful tool for judging the clarity and effectiveness of discourse. Indeed, Hirsch would argue that relative readability allows us to define composition more precisely as "the linguistics of literacy"—literacy meaning the ability to write extended communicative discourse. Inherent in this discipline, moreover, is an "authentic ideology of literacy" to guide our teaching of composition and provide for teachers of writing "the common ground on which we can all stand in our common enterprise" (p. xiii). It is in this sense that Hirsch has thought it appropriate to speak of *the* philosophy of composition. And it is because of rhetoric like this that some readers object to the tone of Hirsch's book.

Yet it seems inevitable that even more readers will be offended, since by clearing the way for his discussion of readability, Hirsch has struck down a number of sacred cows. Chapter one argues that writing is *not* merely a secondary representation of speech (as some linguists might say), because the writer must use verbal conventions to replace the concrete situations and the extra-verbal clues that belong to oral speech. Thus "write it naturally, as if you were talking to me" is not necessarily good advice. Chapter two maintains that "standard written languages are difficult in *kind* from oral dialects . . . and [this] distinction . . . removes the whole issue of bidialectism from the teaching of literacy" (pp. 7-8). More bluntly, "the widespread misapplication of the doctrine of universal correctness . . . had led to misguided experiments in teaching students to read and write oral dialects, as well as to misguided manifestoes with titles like 'Students' Right to Their Own Language" (p. 41). Chapter three runs counter to what many historical linguists believe, concluding that "the tendency of historical change," both in languages and in prose styles, "has been forward in its movement toward ever greater communicative functionality" (p. 53). These three chapters have additional objectives, of course, but the points mentioned

above demonstrate a particular way in which this book can be useful to the profession.

Of more immediate importance for the analysis of prose are chapter four, "Refining the Concept of Readability," and chapter five, "The Psychological Bases of Readability." These excellent chapters draw upon research in several fields to explain the special problems writers encounter as they try to put sentences together in the best (i.e. most readable) way possible. Students of the composing process will find Hirsch's references a helpful guide to research.

Chapter six suggests "Some Practical Applications" for the principles of readability. By correlating these psychological and linguistic principles with the familiar "maxims" or rules of thumb (e.g. "omit needless words" or "keep related words together") which have been reproduced by generations of composition handbooks, Hirsch distinguishes the maxims that are most significant for composing. A final chapter, "The Valid Assessment of Writing Ability," discusses the implications of readability for developing shared, objective standards for grading student papers —one of the crucial impediments, Hirsch thinks, to making composition a true academic discipline.

On balance, *The Philosophy of Composition* is a precise, practical book within its narrow field of focus. Like Robert Pirsig's Phaedrus (who was also a rhetorician), Hirsch has hit the moon with a laser beam, but he doesn't provide much illumination. There are more facets to the teaching of writing than he cares to treat. But if we can accept the book on these terms, Hirsch can teach us a great deal about the stylistric, semantic and syntactic relationships that govern the making of good prose.